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Tip of the Week



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It's almost spring!

Spring arrives later this month--yeah! In several weeks we'll be out looking for great annual flowers and maybe someone to design and plant fabulous containers for our homes or businesses.

In the meantime, there will be frost and probably several more inches of snow. So while all of us pent-up gardeners are on standby to put trowel in hand, it seemed like a good time to send forth some color. Here are two stunning annual displays that won awards in ALCC's 2009 Excellence in Landscape Awards program.

Last month, the winners were announced and received their awards. This month, we want to share these photo appetizers to help get you buy until the main course of planting is served up in mid-May.

Speaking of color. Did you know that Colorado is the proving ground for flowers that are used nation wide?

If a plant can grow in Colorado's aridity, temperature extremes and intense light, it can do well in other places. Colorado State University, since the late 1990s, has hosted one of the country's two major plant trial gardens and it has gained national prominence for its quality of plants, layout and maintenance. The garden is visible on the main campus and open to visitors throughout the growing season. Last August, 1,200 annuals were evaluated by more than 100 judges.

To become a winner, a plant must be phenomenal in every

way and better than plants already on the market. Desirable qualities that judges assess are the ones that mean the most to us as consumers: color, fragrance, amount of flower showing above foliage, length of the plant's flowering season and resistance to diseases and pests.

If you don't make it to Fort Collins to take in the show, Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG) also puts the winners on display. This year, Colorado will have another trial site when DBG opens its vegetative trials. This is a timely addition since vegetable gardening is a growing national trend.

Get your wish list ready for the 2010 landscape season by viewing all the [2009 Excellence in Landscape](#) award-winning landscapes.

And if you need help planning or installing this year's annuals, go to www.alcc.com and click on *Find a Pro*. Many member companies specialize in designing, installing and maintaining annual gardens.